



Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
**Director Beth Anderson, center, gives stage direction to actor Joy Love Breshears, right, in her role portraying Dorothy in the Hermiston High School production of "The Wizard of Oz" during a dress rehearsal Monday in Hermiston.**

**Wizard of Oz cast:**

Dorothy Gale — Joy Love Breshears  
 Aunt Em — Samantha Steffey  
 Uncle Henry/Ozian Guard — Samuel Surber  
 Scarecrow/Hunk — William Kern  
 Tinman/Hickory — Brooks Bellinger  
 Cowardly Lion/Zeke — Louis Parra  
 Wicked Witch/Almira Gulch — Faith Powell  
 Professor Chester Marvel/The Wizard of Oz — Shawn Conant  
 Glinda — Keali'imanoale Hamilton  
 Munchkin Mayor — Maja Rahm  
 Munchkin Coroner: Dezirae Klaviter  
 Citizens of Munchkinland/Poppies/Ozians/Trees: Mackenzie Andersen, Kylie Barker, Nicholas Breshears,

Lainey Byrd, Emilio Cambell, Mattison Christensen, McKenna I. Christensen, Justin Goucher, Isabelle Herrera, Madelyn Jordheim, Sophia Jordheim, Dezirae Klaviter, Aurelio Marin, Pedro Martinez, John Myrick, Charles Nelson, Alyssa Perkins, Maja Rahm, Samantha Steffey, Zariah Uzzell, Karlee Varady, Annalise Wright  
 Special Women's Chorus: Alyssa Perkins, Sophia Jordheim, Madelyn Jordheim  
 Flying Monkeys: Isabelle Herrera, Emilio Cambell, Pedro Martinez, Paul Vore  
 Lollipop Guild: Alyssa Perkins, Sophia Jordheim, Madelyn Jordheim  
 Munchkin "toughs": Emilio Campbell, Pedro Martinez, Charles Nelson  
 Winkie General: Annalise Wright  
 Winkies: Nicholas Breshears, Aurelio Marin, Pedro Martinez

For a list of the crew members and orchestra visit [www.hermistonherald.com](http://www.hermistonherald.com)



Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
**Faith Powell portraying the Wicked Witch takes Toto, played by Sparky, from Dorothy, played by Joy Love Breshears, in a dress rehearsal for the production of "The Wizard of Oz" on Monday in Hermiston.**

**WIZARD**

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of an audience, she said, but the stage manager and assistants have to have the confidence to boss their peers around. It may look like chaos as people and set pieces move around quietly in the dark backstage, but there is a very specific method to the madness so that everyone and everything comes on stage at exactly the right moment.

This spring's star of the show is Joy Breshears, who donned Dorothy's signature blue dress and ruby slippers Monday. In between being rushed off stage by flying monkeys during multiple tries to get the staging just right, she said the thing she loves about acting is "finding pieces of myself inside these other characters."

Thoroughly memorizing the dialogue and songs and movements so that she can focus on character development takes a lot of work, she said.

"I've read my script more times than I can count and annoyed my family with 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow.'"

she said.

For this show she also had to get used to working with an animal co-star, playing Dorothy's dog Toto.

"Sparky is amazing," she said. "He hangs out in my arms a lot. He's so sweet. He licks my face a lot."

Dorothy's traveling companions are played by Louis Parra (Cowardly Lion), Brooks Bellinger (Tinman) and William Kern (Scarecrow).

Kern, a sophomore, said he loved his character.

"He's really fun. He's kind of silly," Kern said. "I like how loopy-goopy he is. I can relate because I'm kind of all over."

Faith Powell, a freshman who was getting used to a face full of green paint as the Wicked Witch, said it was her first high school play.

"I love the Wizard of Oz, it's one of my favorite musicals," she said. "I have memories of watching it with my family when I was five."

Her favorite part of the character was "messing with" the audience, she said, and perfecting the villain's evil

cackle.

"My favorite scene is in Munchkinland, because I get to be really sassy toward Glinda," she said.

The play features a large supporting cast and chorus members who show up as munchkins, flying monkeys, singing trees, poppies, Winkie guards and residents of Oz. Chorus members Kylie Barker and Zariah Uzzell said the hardest part was learning all the choreography.

"We have so many different steps, and each character is a different person," Uzzell said. "The Ozians are rich, for a tree I have to be stiff, and munchkins are like little kids."

Everyone interviewed said the best part of any theater production is always the friends they make. While there is downtime during early rehearsals, however, Monday's four-hour rehearsal was too busy for long conversations.

Some scenes ran smoothly, while others Anderson called a halt to in order to make adjustments. During one scene, the set pieces didn't come together right and technical crew mem-

bers swarmed onstage, studying the problem and laying down bits of color-coded tape to "spike" where the new placement would go.

Jessica Chavez, an assistant stage manager, said while the actors often have elements of their performance set well in advance, the crew working backstage and in the lighting/sound booth are often keeping track of a multitude of last-minute changes to their jobs.

"We have to be adaptable," she said, adding they also have to keep careful notes because "if we don't remember, no one will."

"The Wizard of Oz" premieres Friday in the Hermiston High School auditorium at 7 p.m. with additional shows at 7 p.m. on Saturday and on Feb. 8 and 9. There will also be a matinee showing this Sunday, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors age 65 and older, and \$5 for students. Seating is general admission, but groups of 10 or more may purchase reserved seats by e-mailing Beth Anderson at [beth.anderson@hermistonhsd.org](mailto:beth.anderson@hermistonhsd.org).

**BTW**

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St.). Students can also get immunized at their pharmacy or doctor's office.

Students can now begin signing up for **Driver's Ed** through **Hermiston High School**. Classes cost \$255, although students who qualify for free and reduced lunch can sign up for a \$75 scholarship.

Priority will be given to Hermiston students for the spring classes, but the summer session will be open to all students from Umatilla and Morrow counties.

The **American Red Cross** recently celebrated several blood donors during regular monthly collection events held at **Good Shepherd Medical Center** in Hermiston.

Volunteer **Patti Perkins** reported first-time donors in the past four months included **Cary Sherrow**, **Alaina Hyatt**, **Makayla Neely** and **Serena Barker**. Also, in November, several donors met gallon milestones, including **Paula Morris** (7), **Kevin Hodges** (17) and **John Nagode** (18).

Also, Perkins expressed appreciation to service groups that have provided sandwiches and cookies:

**Emblem Club, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Red Cross volunteers and Altrusa International of Hermiston.**

The next community blood draw is **Monday, Feb. 18** from noon to 6 p.m. at Good Shepherd, 610 N.W. 11th St. While walk-ins are welcome, Perkins said it's helpful for volunteers if people make an appointment by calling 1-800-448-3543. For more information, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

You can submit items for our weekly *By The Way* column by emailing your tips to [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com).

**GRADS**

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completion rate.

"That's still important to me, because the students who left are still prepared for what they're going to do next," she said.

Mooney said there is still work to do, but they plan to focus even more on tactics they've already implemented.

She said the hiring of graduation coach Omar Medina has been one positive change, as well as collecting data to help them figure out where students need more help.

Across all grade levels, she said, they're focusing

on more attendance efforts.

"I think we're breaking down silos of work," she said. "We're not looking at anything different for next year, we're looking at staying the course."

Other schools in Umatilla County saw improvement as well. Umatilla School District cleared the statewide rate by nearly six points, graduating students at a rate of 84.16 percent in 2017-18. Their rates were up from 81.72 percent the previous year.

Superintendent Heidi Sipe said via email that she was proud of students' continued success, but their goal is still helping all students receive a high school

diploma, whether in four years or a few years longer.

"We continue to welcome our non-completing students back until age 21 to finish their diplomas," Sipe said.

"While those students do not always count in graduation calculations, they count in our community and we are honored to support students until they earn their diplomas."

Stanfield School District fell just below the state average, with a 76.92 percent graduation rate. Stanfield had 42 students in its 2017-18 class.

Echo School graduated 87.5 percent of its students, in a class of 34 students.

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